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Monumentalizing Rituals of the Palestinian Diaspora

Reema Abu Hassan

Monumentalizing Rituals of the Palestinian Diaspora

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The greatest appreciation goes to my parents and my family for their constant support throughout this journey.

I dedicate this thesis to my grandparents and especially to my grandmothers for being the Palestinian matriarchs that have kept us attached to our Palestinian identities through the power of ritual.

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In the home where my Palestinian grandmother has lived for the last 37 years, tools and ingredients—purchased from local shops in Qatar—cover the granite kitchen counter-top. Every year my grandmother and I gather around the counter-top and set up our annual Eid ritual. This ritual was born in the diaspora, following the 1948 catastrophic rupture, which exiled my grandmother from her home in Palestine. She has performed this ritual for decades and keeps it alive by teaching it to me, and to her other granddaughters. To participate in this ritual, we gather during the month of Ramadan, just a few days before Eid. We perform the choreographed steps of making *maamoul*, the dough and date treat we associate with Eid. As we press the dough into the *maamoul* molds and begin to bake, a wonderful aroma fills the house and draws together four generations of exiled family members, who gather to celebrate, and taste the *maamoul*.

When this ritual takes place, Palestine's existence becomes more tangible, and the entire family is connected to their individual and collective Palestinian identities. Once it passes, the Palestinian-ness of our diasporic family recedes into the background of everyday life. The tools are put away until the ritual repeats when they are taken out again the following Eid.

ABSTRACT

Displaced Palestinians have historically sought to preserve their Palestinian memories and identities in order to remain connected to their lost homeland. Despite the importance of memory for them, and their history of suffering and exile, there have not been any significant monuments designed to preserve their collective memory.

This thesis considers the adaptation of a traditional monument by redesigning it to the specificity of the Palestinian diaspora. In doing so it proposes the monumentalizing of four Palestinian rituals to add significance, meaning and permanence to them. The four rituals are making *maamoul*, applying orange and *mashmoom* perfume oil to hair, pouring Palestinian olive oil and dispersing sage tea leaves within a family. The key attributes captured, conveyed and explored within these rituals are the role of the matriarch and the sensory olfactory system that elicits memories and narratives of Palestine.

INTRODUCTION

Memories, rituals and narratives around rituals, which have been passed down through generations of displaced Palestinians who have lost their home, play an important role in defining Palestinian identity. The loss of their homeland began with the Israeli expulsion of Palestinians in the aftermath of the 1948 and the 1967 wars, known as the *Nakbas*. These *Nakbas*, or catastrophes, mark the Israeli encroachment and occupation of Palestinian land and homes. There are now over six million displaced Palestinians living in the diaspora. This placeless-ness creates a lingering void for the displaced, which can only be patched or filled with narratives and rituals of home.

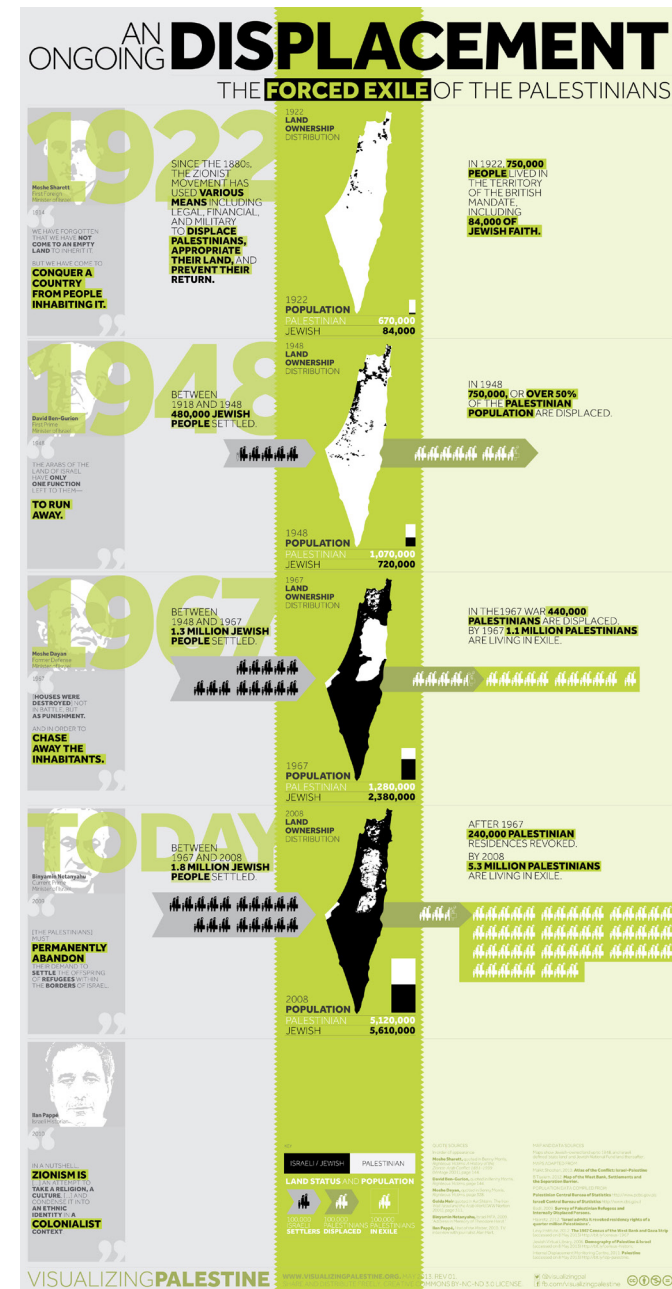
This thesis defines Palestinian rituals as a series of repetitive actions that are passed down through generations. The significance of these rituals is brought to life as a result of the narratives that connect them back to Palestine. This connection to the lost home is reinforced every time the rituals take place.



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PROBLEM STATEMENT

As previously mentioned, there are no significant monuments that add permanence to memories of displaced Palestinians. A monument is traditionally static and monumentalizes a single narrative of a place and an event to preserve or commemorate a collective memory. However, Palestinian collective memory is not static; it is everchanging, due to the plurality of personal Palestinian experiences and memories that reject a single narrative.¹ For displaced Palestinians, conscious and real connections to Palestine are weakened with every passing generation. This, in turn, threatens the erasure of Palestinian-ness.

This thesis attempts to unpack the following questions: How can Palestine be preserved, and how can Palestinian-ness endure? How can Palestinians regain some form of agency over their homeland? How can a part of the homeland be experienced in the diaspora? What could a monument for the Palestinian diaspora be, and how could it capture the diversity inherent to the diaspora? How can a traditional monument be adapted and designed for a people whose diasporic Palestinian-ness is associated with “out-of-placeness” and “placelessness?”²

DELIMITATIONS

This thesis focuses on the Palestinian Diaspora as it exists in The State of Qatar and positions memory, place and identity as key pillars.

Issues of occupation, the right of return, and suffering are givens within this topic, but they are beyond the scope of this research. Resistance and activism are a reaction to the realities of the situation. This thesis—in and of itself—is an act of resistance against the Israeli occupation. The outcomes of this research are an act of defiance against the erasure of Palestine, because they monumentalize and add significance and permanence to Palestinian rituals. The monumentalized rituals have all been born in, or adapted to, the diaspora. Therefore, this thesis contributes to the preservation of Palestinian memories and rituals, and thus, monumentalizes Palestinian-ness.

BACKGROUND & PRECEDENT STUDY

A monument has traditionally been defined as a static entity that honors and commemorates a person or an event. Contemporary monuments have altered the relationship between author, visitor and memorial. Authors Quentin Stevens and Karen A Franck state that this relationship has evolved, "... from one of viewing, to one of engaging in a variety of ways—by occupying, touching and hearing, and participating in acts of commemoration."³ This engagement with contemporary monuments has aided the shift toward memorialization of loss and trauma. Engagement with monuments has, in turn, provided increased agency that invites the visitor to experience the memorial through participation. The active involvement of participants engaging with monuments captures and takes into account a variety of memories that, in the words of Stevens and Franck, meet, "...the needs of a diversity of mourners."⁴



04



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The German artist Gunter Demnig addresses multiplicity within the design of his monument entitled Stumbling Stones. He initiated it in 1992, and according to Eliza Apperly, he has now, "...laid more than 70,000 *Stolpersteinestones*, making them the world's largest decentralized monument to the Holocaust."⁵ The project consists of commemorative brass plaques, which have been inserted into existing paved roads and walkways. Due to the small size of these steppingstones, the monument lacks the presence of a traditional monument on a single site. Instead, they are small brass stones inserted among the cobblestones in streets.⁶ The stepping stones can be found in over 1,200 cities and towns across Europe and Russia. This project highlights and focuses on individual tragedies, where each steppingstone commemorates a single victim outside the victim's last residence.

The multiple steppingstones that make up this monument represent a variety of memories by addressing and celebrating the individuals when—combined—form the collective.⁷ The coordinated, yet dispersed nature of the stones maximizes the level of



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engagement with the public and conveys a diversity of meanings. Thus, this monument addresses placeless-ness and the need for the memorialization of different locations and events, unlike most traditional monuments.

In the case of the Palestinian diaspora, mass exile to different parts of the world has led to a variety of individual Palestinian experiences. The Professor and scholar Lena Jayyusi discusses this multiplicity within the context of Palestinian memory and writes:

...each new tale is an echo within the echo, focusing and conjuring the collective predicament through the individual, and ramifying the significances and symbolic meanings of the individual experience through the collective. Iteration of the same yet different, difference within the same, which is a feature of Palestinian collective identity.⁸



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There is no single Palestinian memory, rather, there are many interwoven memories that form a collective. When memory becomes a collective entity, shared identities bring people together and the accompanying memories are preserved through acts of remembrance within the group.⁹ These acts render collective memory as everchanging, due to the vastness of personal experience and memory, rejecting a single plot or narrative.¹⁰

Individuals are tied to collective identities through rituals that form shared memory through their repetitive nature. The scholar Catherine Bell states that, "...ritual never exists alone. It is usually one ceremony among many in the larger ritual life of a person or community."¹¹

The ritual of making flatbread in Ethiopian culture is a useful example. The project INJERA, designed by Dana Douiew, consists of tools and utensils adapted for contemporary kitchens. It enables the ritualistic preparation of the traditional Ethiopian *injera* bread. This project addresses the loss of cultural elements in Ethiopian



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households caused by migration. According to Douiew, these designed objects tell the story of a culture and enable the passing down of the ceremonial ritual of making *injera*.¹² The adapted set of tools monumentalizes the ritual and ceremonial process of making *injera*, preserving the Ethiopian tradition for future generations.

Some memorials encourage participation through the performance of a ritual, relying on direct engagement with the monument. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial at the National Mall in Washington, DC, designed by Maya Lin, is a good example. The memorial consists of two polished black granite walls. The names of U.S. service members, who died or were proclaimed missing in the Vietnam War, are etched into the surface in chronological order. The memorial invites visitors to form a personal connection with the memorial itself, by offering a ritual of commemoration. As Stevens and Franck relate, visitors engage with the walls by, "...touching a name, making a rubbing, photographing it, and leaving a tribute."¹³ By providing various means of engaging with individual



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names on the wall, the memorial ultimately commemorates the individual contributions that make up the collective. The memory of the war becomes the memory of soldiers who died or never returned. There is no evidence that the monument was designed with this ritual in mind; it organically evolved from the visitors' need to engage with the personal memories triggered by the monument.

Rituals assign meaning to place and identity.¹⁴ According to the Palestinian theologian Mitri Raheb, "...our narratives of the self, both in casual conversation and in written autobiography, are dominated by narratives of place."¹⁵ Place and site in traditional monuments are static, and the site plays a significant role in how they are perceived. For instance, the Aids Memorial Quilt project, established in 1987 in San Francisco, demonstrates an alternative approach to the traditional significance of a permanent place. The project, designed to be mobile, memorializes the Aids epidemic in a place-less manner. Visitors' experiences of the memorial are altered by its shifting location. Stevens and Franck write



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that, "Mobile memorials illustrate the value of commemorative installations that are permanent in their materiality but temporary in their location."¹⁶ The quilt consists of more than 48,000 individual panels, which are sewn together by the mourners of individuals who died of AIDS.¹⁷ This act of sewing the quilts, performed by victims' loved ones, is designed to be a ritual act, used to produce the monument.¹⁸ In addition to its mobility, this monument is constantly growing. Participants continue to make new quilted panels. Its growth over time reflects the ongoing loss of life, due to AIDS. The monument's place and size are forever shifting.

For Palestinians in the diaspora, place is rather peculiar because, according to Raheb, it means, "...not only being away from home, but somehow, in the Palestinian case, being without a home."¹⁹ This unique condition raises questions of defining Palestinian identity in relation to a place from which many have been exiled. Placelessness shapes Palestinians' desires and needs for a home, as they attempt to overcome their forced exile. Therefore, memories and narratives of Palestine endure.



Memory is not only tied to notions of place; it is also associated with objects.²⁰ In many Palestinian homes in the diaspora, one finds Palestinian objects. These objects represent a home and a sense of place through narratives associated with place. They have a capacity to function as remnants of authentic experience, similar to a souvenir. The literary critic Susan Stewart writes:

The souvenir speaks to a context of origin through a language of longing, for it is not an object arising out of need or use value; it is an object out of the necessarily insatiable demands of nostalgia. The souvenir generates a narrative which reaches only "behind," spiraling in a continually inward movement rather than outward toward the future.²¹



Nostalgia for displaced Palestinians is inherited from exiled parents and grandparents and is evident and manifested in the form of Palestinian objects, displayed throughout their homes. These objects, such as the Dome of the Rock, the Palestinian map or the Palestinian flag, perpetuate a sense of nostalgia evident in stories from the Palestinian diaspora. These stories are vital. A Palestinian child born in the diaspora to exiled parents identifies as a Palestinian through these stories, which are shared and told within the household, and also through the Palestinian objects in the home. Jayyusi says that, "Palestinians may perhaps be singular in their narrative awareness and rendition of this, a marker perhaps of the consciousness of its still unfolding character and the collective need to hold fast: memory as resistance."²² In the Palestinian case, there seems to be a constant need to preserve narratives as a means of connection to home. This preservation is of a collective memory of Palestine. According to Maurice Halbwachs—the author who coined the term—collective memory is a method for preserving communal identity.²³ Thus, collective memory is vital to Palestinian identity.

INVESTIGATIONS

Three Pillars: Memory, Place and Identity

The following investigations explore three pillars of this thesis: memory, place and identity. Research methods used in these investigations include interviews, observations, artifact analysis and participatory workshops. The aim of the investigations is to collect and understand nuanced personal stories and experiences from a variety of Palestinians scattered throughout the diaspora, in order to identify core strategies for the monumentalization of Palestinian rituals.



Fatma Abu Saadah, first generation exiled



Saeed Abu Hassan, second generation exiled



Dania Abu Hassan, third generation exiled

Memory

As previously mentioned, Palestinian memories and corresponding narratives are a key defining factor of Palestinian identities in the diaspora. To further unpack the inheritance of memory, interviews collected stories, perspectives, and information from three generations of exiled Palestinians living in Qatar.

Fatma Abu Saadah is a grandmother in her 70's. She was exiled from Jaffa in 1948 at seven months of age. She has lived in Qatar for the majority of her life. She is the family matriarch and maintains the connection to its collective Palestinian identity.

Saeed Abu Hassan, 52, is the son of Fatma. He was born in Qatar and has lived there as an exiled Palestinian for 42 years. He holds Canadian citizenship.

Dania Abu Hassan, 22, is the granddaughter of Fatma. She was born in Qatar and has lived there as an exiled Palestinian for 18 years. She holds Canadian citizenship.



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When Fatma, the family matriarch, was asked about Jaffa, she immediately began to describe its scent. Since her exile, she has never returned, due to Israeli restrictions that prohibit her from entering her homeland. She has never experienced the scent herself, but her parents' memories of Jaffa's oranges were described to her numerous times. She says:

I did not smell the scent of my country! I did not smell the scent of my country, but I've heard them say that as you are walking, you smell the flowers of the lemon trees and the oranges. They say that everything is different in Palestine.

This memory, inherited from her parents, has become her own, and she has passed it down to her children and grandchildren.

Her son, Saeed, and granddaughter, Dania, were able to visit Jaffa, due to their Canadian citizenship. Saeed recalls smelling the oranges during their visit. However, Dania does not remember the stories of the oranges, nor did she smell them when she was in Jaffa.

These different perspectives illustrate the role of inherited memory and the multiplicity of experience within this single exiled Palestinian family, living in the diaspora.



Dome of the rock



Palestinian Flag

Place

A series of interviews with a wider spectrum of exiled Palestinians in Qatar investigated and explored the relation of objects to place. These interviews focused on Palestinian objects within the homes of the interviewees and within Palestinian institutions in Qatar. Many of the objects are stereotypical symbols of Palestine, such as the Dome of the Rock, the Palestinian flag, the olive tree and Palestinian embroidery. The conclusion, following these interviews, and following an artifact analysis, is that these objects function as mere symbols. Interviewees did not relate them to actual memories or connect them to their Palestinian-ness. They portrayed the objects as part of the background of everyday life.



Identity

Palestine is in your blood; you won't forget it. It is impossible. Could you say, for example—you have a Canadian passport—could you say, "I'm Canadian," and leave Palestine? No. Palestine—it is the mother. *Fatma Abu Saadah, grandmother*

As a Canadian I would live on the beach in Jaffa. As a Palestinian I would live in the occupied areas and be forced to have checkpoints. *Dania Abu Hassan, granddaughter*

Where can I free myself of the homeland in my body? *Mahmoud Darwish, Palestinian National Poet.*²⁴



By viewing Palestinian objects through the lens of identity, the interview subjects were more likely to connect their identity to objects in their homes. These objects ranged from souvenirs to inherited objects passed down through generations. This led to a line of questioning, designed to understand the significance of these objects: For people trying to hold on to their Palestinian identities, do these objects serve that function? What is the importance of having these objects in Palestinian homes in the diaspora? Are they a physical manifestation of a memory and identity?

When Saeed was asked about the Palestinian objects that he brought back from his trip to Jaffa, he replied:

It is important to have objects, like souvenirs, or specific things we brought from there, so you remember where you are from.



Dania, the third-generation exiled Palestinian, keeps many of the items she brought back from Palestine scattered across her room. She has images, postcards and objects from Jaffa. When asked about the memories she has attached to these objects, and the way in which they reinforce her identity as a Palestinian, she responded, "Our identity only stands on memory."

Fatma, the matriarch, did not attach significance to Palestinian objects, and has very few of them in her home. Instead, she associates connection to her Palestinian identity with the performance of inherited rituals.



Most of the interviewees associate their Palestinian-ness with distinct family rituals, performed with or by their Palestinian family matriarch. They are aware of their connection to Palestine and view the rituals as quintessentially Palestinian. They fondly associate Palestinian memories with the scent of grandma's house and kitchen.

PARTICIPATORY WORKSHOPS

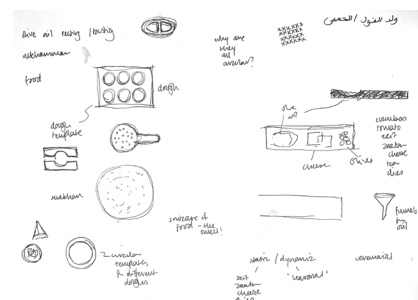
Once the interviews identified the significance of rituals, a series of participatory workshops generated and discovered stories of rituals within the diaspora.



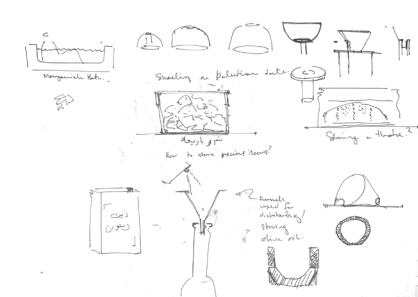
Palestinian Designers' Workshop

The first workshop consisted of four Palestinian designers living in Qatar. It began with a series of questions: What Palestinian rituals do you perform? What tools are associated with these rituals? If they exist, do they have an inherent value, and do they capture the specificity of the ritual they support? How could these rituals be monumentalized?

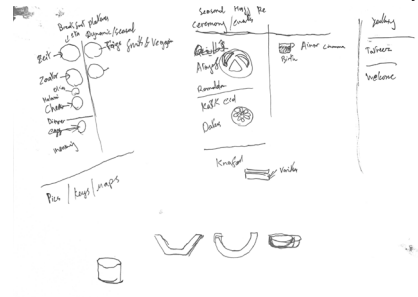
The workshop began with sketching and writing, followed by group discussion.



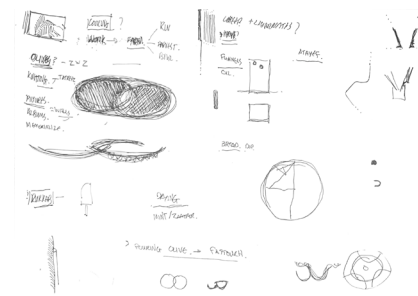
1. Yasmeen Suleiman



2. Mariam Al Sarraj



3. Mahmoud Abbas



4. Mohammad Suleiman

The participants prototyped tools for their chosen ritual. These included:

1. Yasmeen Suleiman: Making Mkhmar bread once a year, as a family. The matriarch uses her hand as the only measuring tool.
2. Mariam Al Sarraj: Importing large tins of olive oil from Palestine, and then pouring olive oil from the large tins into smaller containers, for daily use. The matriarch uses a funnel with a "made in China" sticker on it.
3. Mahmoud Abbas: Enjoying a typical Palestinian breakfast, in a family that teases him about his portion sizes. Bowls, designed to capture the story, reflect his own personal Palestinian ritual.
4. Mohammad Suleiman: Eating olives, which are quintessentially Palestinian, from a plate made by his aunt in Palestine.



مهرجان سينما فلسطين الدوحة
DOHA PALESTINE CINEMA FESTIVAL

ورشة عمل مع 'لقاءات طين'
Clay Encounters Workshop

clayencounters.net/classes

الخميس | ١٧ تشرين أول ٢٠١٩
٩:٠٠ - ١٠:٣٠م

السبت | ١٩ تشرين أول ٢٠١٩
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THU | 17 OCT 2019
4:00-5:30pm | 9:00-10:30pm

SAT | 19 OCT 2019
9:00-10:30am

مطافئ مقر الفنانين | ستوديو ١٠١
DOHA FIRE STATION | STUDIO 101



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Doha Palestine Cinema Festival

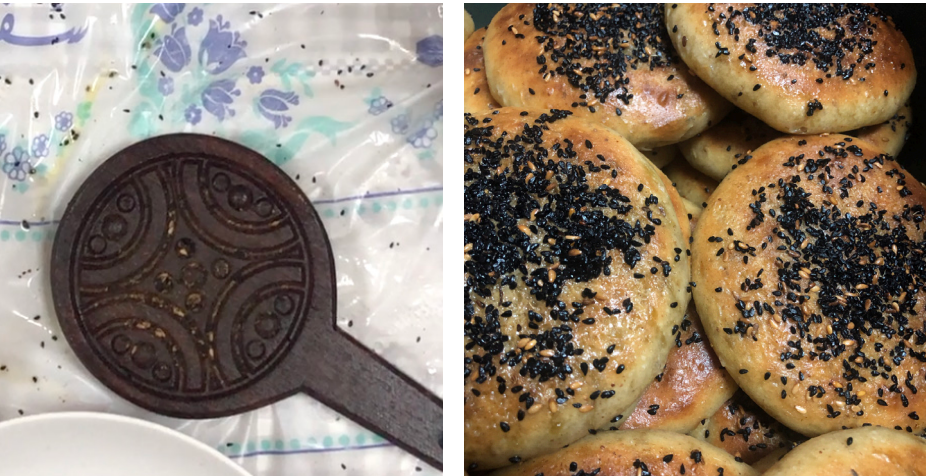
The next set of participatory workshops took place during the Doha Palestine Cinema Festival. Three workshops involved 23 participants. The first two workshops were Palestinian ritual workshops, similar to the Palestinian designers' workshop. The final workshop was a Qatari ritual workshop. The workshops identified a wide range of rituals and produced tools as tangible outcomes.

Findings from the four workshops:

1. The majority of rituals focused on scent and on culinary rituals.
2. Very few tools are specific to Palestinian rituals. Possibly because displaced Palestinians typically move around throughout their lifetimes.
3. Despite the multiplicity, previously identified as a characteristic of this diaspora, the participants could relate to each other's rituals as a part of their collective identity.
4. The majority of rituals are performed by the matriarch, who is typically the binding factor connecting the family to their Palestinian identities by performing these rituals.

RITUALS

Narratives and rituals uncovered throughout the research were either born within, or have been adapted for, the Palestinian diaspora. Upon watching, performing and documenting rituals of the diaspora, the lack of specific tools for supporting Palestinian rituals became abundantly clear. Existing tools, currently being used, came from a local grocery store and are not seen as valuable or meaningful. How could rituals that are so vital to a family's Palestinian identity lack any value and be so generic?



The Suleiman family gathers once a year, before Eid, to perform their annual family ritual. They inherited it from their hometown of Jenin and have adapted it to their life in the diaspora. The matriarch leads the ritual, and it draws the entire family together, to participate in the ritual's performance.

Core attributes of rituals of the Palestinian diaspora:

1. The matriarch's role, maintaining Palestinian rituals in the home.
2. The matriarch's desire to preserve and pass down rituals and ritualistic skills to the next generation.
3. Rituals that have either been born in the diaspora or have been adapted to the diaspora.
4. The ability for rituals to provide a connection to Palestine as the homeland.
5. The importance of scent, which elicits Palestinian memories.
6. Variety among rituals, from family to family.

OUTCOMES

The outcomes of this thesis draw upon the three core attributes identified above: the matriarch, scent, and inheritance. These attributes are driving factors in the design of four sets of artifacts that support, celebrate, and elevate Palestinian rituals. Each of the selected rituals was born in, or has been adapted for the diaspora. Through material, form and the narratives they elicit, the artifacts monumentalize the unique conditions of rituals within the Palestinian diaspora.

Blue glass elements, which serve vital roles in each designed outcome, symbolize the matriarch's role. The matriarch is the glue that binds the family to its Palestinian identity. Blue glass is prevalent in Palestine, a recognized symbol of the country's heritage. The use of blue glass connects these projects—and the rituals they support in the diaspora—to Palestine.



The form language of the artifacts references traditional monuments. Pure circles, concentric rings, stable plinths, and obelisk forms elicit the long tradition of monuments. The stacking of individual elements, to form a unified body, celebrates the role each individual plays in establishing a community of shared vision and purpose.

The outcomes monumentalize four rituals:

- Remembering Home
- Hybridizing Scents of Home
- Funneling Resistance
- Sharing Scent



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Remembering Home

Eid, a holiday that takes place twice a year, is accompanied, in my family, by the ritual of making the Palestinian baked good known as maamoul. My grandmother leads the process of making maamoul, inviting her daughters and granddaughters to her house, and passing this learned skill down to us. When she does, she preserves the Palestinian-ness of our family and ensures the longevity of this shared ritual and its associated memories.

My grandmother prepares all of the ingredients, including her signature spice, which gives the maamoul its flavour and scent. She stores the spices in one of many generic plastic containers, which has a ripped piece of paper for a label. Once the maamoul is baked, the scent of the spice fills the house and draws my entire extended family together. When this ritual is performed, Palestine exists for my multi-generational family. We are connected to both our individual and our collective Palestinian-ness through the performance of the ritual.



Despite the importance of this ritual, the tools that my grandmother and I use when we make maamoul lack specificity and value. The only specific tools that we have are the molds used for pressing the dough into its distinctive maamoul form. The molds are typically made of wood and are not considered valuable.

To monumentalize this important ritual, I designed new maamoul molds, made from Carrera Marble. Similar to Yasmeen's story from the Palestinian designers' workshop, my grandmother's hand is her unit of measurement. The size of the large mold corresponds to the size of her hand. A scaled down mold is designed to fit the hand of her six-year-old granddaughter, who is being taught to use her own hand as a unit of measurement. The pair of molds—one large and one small—facilitate my grandmother's need to pass this Palestinian ritual on to future generations, to instill a sense of Palestinian identity in us.



To accompany the molds, I also designed a spice jar. Like family members reuniting at Eid, it is made from interlocking rings, each layer dependent on the others. The rings recall the pattern of concentric rings, within the mold, which form the distinctive pattern of maamoul.

The designed artifacts reference the materiality of traditional monuments. Marble is historically used for monuments due to its endurance, precision, luxuriousness and ability to elevate the content of the monument itself. Likewise, the two molds and the spice jar I designed, are made from Carrera Marble to monumentalize my grandmother's ritual. The durability of the material allows the tools to be passed down to future generations, ensuring the endurance of her Palestinian ritual and legacy.





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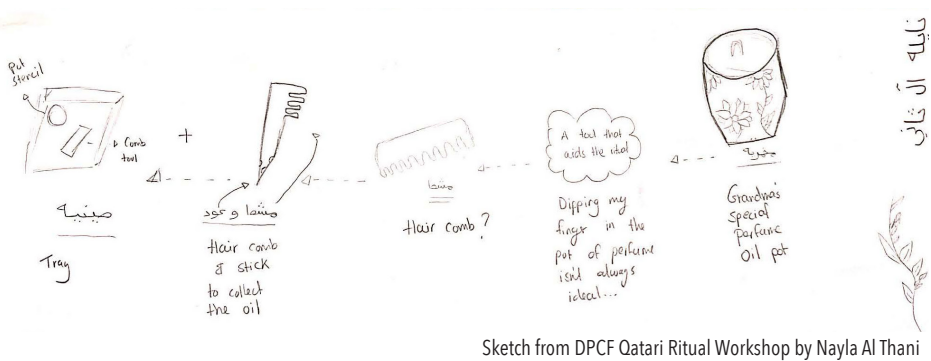


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Hybridizing Scents of Home

In a diaspora there is an inherent hybridization formed between the culture of the homeland and the host country, where displaced people spend their lives. Most of the Palestinians interviewed for this research have lived in Qatar for the majority of their lives. They have inevitably acquired some Qatari cultural traits, which have become a part of their own identity. My second thesis research outcome celebrates this fusion of Palestinian and Qatari culture.

Mashmoom is an indigenous plant in Qatar, traditionally used to produce a perfume oil, which Qatari women apply to their hair. It is popular with young Qatari women, who associate its scent with fond memories of family matriarchs. The following story and ritual emerged from the Qatari rituals workshop during the Doha Palestine Cinema Festival. A woman participating in the workshop told the story of her grandmother dipping her finger into an oil bottle filled with *mashmoom*, and then running her finger through her hair. The woman's late grandmother left her the bottle when she died, and the woman now uses it to perform this inherited ritual.



Sketch from DPCF Qatari Ritual Workshop by Nayla Al Thani

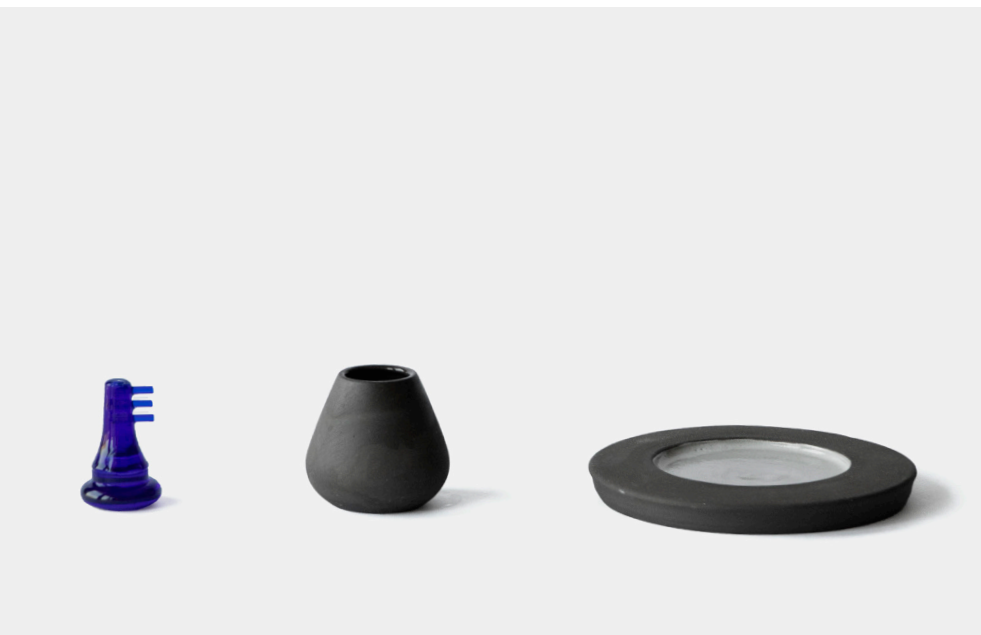


Fatma Abu Saadah (my grandmother)

In my family of Palestinians exiled from Jaffa, we have inherited our grandmother's memory of the scent of oranges. When I smell oranges, the scent elicits my grandmother's stories of Jaffa and the connection it held, for her, with Palestine.

Combining these two narratives—of my grandmother's fondness for the scent of oranges and the Qatari grandmother's ritual use of *mashmoom* oil, I designed a ceramic vessel to contain the combined scents of *mashmoom* and oranges. The ceramic is slightly porous—by design—and a small amount of oil seeps through, allowing the scent to emanate. The patina that builds up over time, as the oil slowly seeps, is a metaphor for the luster of inherited affinity





Similar to the form of the *maamoul* spice jar, the formal qualities of the perfume bottle draw from traditional monuments. Like a temple on a stone plinth, the perfume bottle sits, securely elevated, on a matching ceramic dish, which is designed to collect the precious oil, as it seeps through the porous ceramic container.

A blue glass comb plugs into the top of the bottle. The comb is used to apply a few drops of oil to the hair. The resulting project monumentalizes the ritual application of scented oil, which carries the scents of two fused cultural traditions, threading together the three pillars of memory, place and identity.



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Funneling Resistance

Olive oil is a powerful symbol of Palestine, found in homes and institutions throughout the Palestinian diaspora. It is associated with Palestinian identity, politics, suffering and Israeli occupation. The oil provides a direct link to a stolen and lost home.

Mahmoud Darwish writes about Palestinian olive oil:

If the oil trees knew the hands that planted them their oil would become tears.²⁵

Many of the displaced Palestinians interviewed for this research import olive oil directly from their homeland in large tin containers. My grandmother imports these tins and stores them out of sight, in a dark cupboard. She brings them out only long enough to pour the oil from the tins into smaller containers, for daily use, using a plastic funnel.



Tin container of Palestinian Olive oil imported to Qatar from Nablus in Palestine



Re-purposed containers for my grandmother's olive oil.

From there, she pours the oil into an even smaller container, which sits on her dresser. She keeps it handy so she can massage olive oil into her joints, to alleviate pain. It is a ritual she inherited from her mother but adapted to her current situation in the diaspora. Being away from her homeland, she must now import large quantities of olive oil, which last an extended period of time, but which come in unwieldy cans.

To memorialize my grandmother's ritual of pouring out the Palestinian olive oil, I designed a set of three vessels. The vessel bodies are made of clear glass to showcase the oil's clarity—a key indicator of quality. The central blue glass piece is a dual-facing funnel. With each vessel, the funnel facilitates the pouring of oil from the tin container, or a larger size vessel, into a smaller one. The blue glass funnel can also be flipped, to form a nozzle, used to pour oil out from each vessel. The largest vessel is for storing oil, the medium size is for cooking, and the smallest is for the bedroom. Once all three vessels are filled, the funnels are capped with a clear glass top.





Sharing Scent

Sage tea is enjoyed in most Palestinian homes. The tea is prepared for individuals, but more commonly for gatherings with family and guests. The scent of the sage tea fills the house during family gatherings. However, sage plants are not as prevalent in the diaspora as in Palestine. The leaves have to be imported to Qatar. My grandmother talks about how everything is different in Palestine; she says sage is grown everywhere, there. The Palestinian sage leaves have more value and meaning in the context of the diaspora because they come from "home."

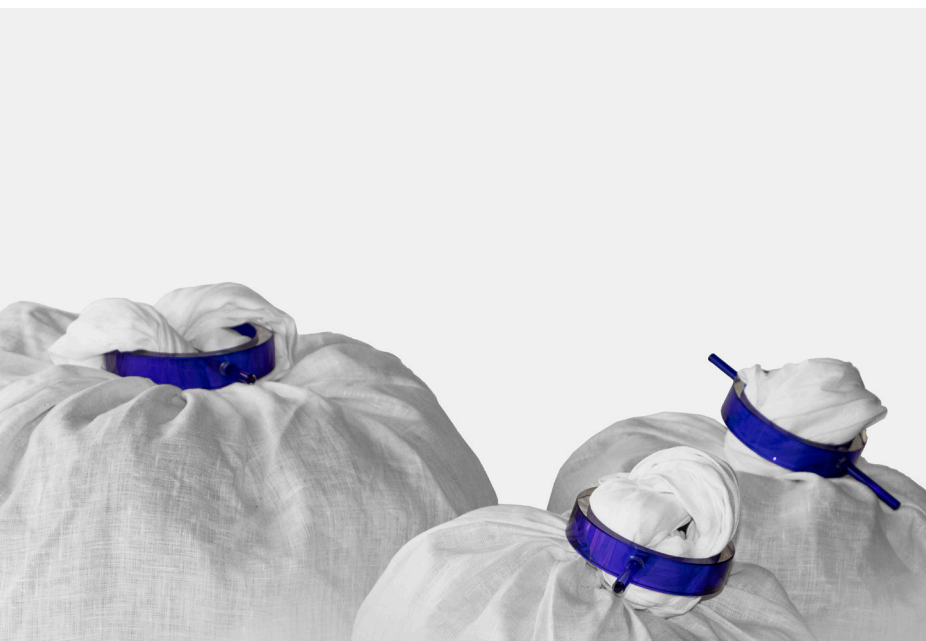
The closest my grandmother can get to Palestine is Jordan. She visits Jordan every summer and brings back large quantities of fresh sage leaves. She dries the leaves in her kitchen as soon as she arrives to her home in Qatar. As it dries, the scent of sage fills her entire house. Her children stop by her sage-scented home to welcome her back, and to receive their annual share of the dried sage. She packs the individual portions in ordinary plastic bags, for her children to take home. She stores the remainder in an old cotton



pillowcase, repurposed to keep the sage fresh throughout the year. The cotton fabric allows breathability, but keeps dust and insects out.

Celebrating the metaphoric resonance between the dispersal of sage leaves, and the displacement of Palestinians throughout the diaspora, I designed a new set of sacks to replace my grandmother's pillowcase and plastic bags. The new sacks are made from tailored linen, to provide increased breathability as well as a level of transparency. The largest sack in the set is for my grandmother, and the two smaller ones are for her children. The shape of the sack, inspired by the pure form of an obelisk, is designed with a circular base. This base allows the linen sack to retain its shape and structure—unlike the pillowcase— as the leaves continue to be removed. The bag is tied by gathering the fabric and looping it through a blue glass ring, which is then secured by pushing a blue glass rod through the gathered fabric, secured against the ring. Opening the bag is now a ritualistic act. My grandmother slides the rod from the ring, and unties the linen, releasing the scent. My grandmother uses her hand to scoop up the sage, and the subtle scent lingers on her hands afterward. She transfers sage leaves into the sacks her children bring with them, when they visit. The ritualized dispersal and sharing of sage leaves occurs annually.





CONCLUSION

The intent of this thesis is to make new types of monuments, which have been adapted to conditions of the Palestinian diaspora. The objective is to monumentalize rituals that Palestinian families have developed—throughout the diaspora, worldwide—which help them cherish and maintain connections to their ancestral homeland.

These acts of monumentalization celebrate the unique plurality of everyday life for a people who are urgently working to preserve their Palestinian memories and rituals. Monumentalized rituals connect Palestinians to their Palestinian identities, reinforcing regular activities designed to resist the erasure of Palestine by the Israeli occupation.

Inspired by four unique stories, each of the four projects celebrates the memory-triggering power of scent, the shared comfort of inherited ritual, and the singular magnetism of the family matriarch.

The literature review demonstrates the way traditional monuments function and shows how contemporary monuments have been adapted and altered to serve specific groups of people and events. Background research on the diaspora narrowed the scope to three key components: loss of home, placelessness and Palestinian identity and place. Memory, place and identity emerged as key pillars of the research during interviews, observations, artifact analysis and participatory workshops. These three pillars drove the monumentalization of the rituals. The participatory workshops and interviews generated stories, which led to the identification of each ritual. By further unpacking and analyzing each ritual, criteria emerged to guide the design of each set of artifacts. The resulting projects monumentalize and celebrate each treasured connection to Palestinian heritage.

REFLECTION & FUTURE DIRECTION

Throughout my investigations, I encountered many personal narratives, experiences and stories shared by the Palestinian community in Qatar. I quickly realized the vastness of the Palestinian diaspora and its inherent plurality. My delimitations allowed me to focus on key components of the diaspora to narrow the research and drive the direction of my thesis.

With more time, the theoretical framework could be expanded, to capture additional rituals and characteristics of the Palestinian diaspora. This research could be further explored and applied to the Palestinian diaspora in other parts of the world. Expanding the scope of interviews and participatory workshops could capture a greater diversity. What other characteristics of the diaspora could be monumentalized through the design of tools for rituals? Could the same ritual have different variations from family to family, or from region to region? How could the same ritual be monumentalized based on the individual family's specific narrative?

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